

Prosody-syntax interface in the expression of focus in Catalan and Spanish

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Catalan and Spanish, two closely-related languages, are considered to mark focus by syntactic means, although recent studies show that prosodic strategies are acceptable as well (Face & D'Imperio 2005, Estebas-Vilaplana 2000). Regarding these prosodic strategies, in Catalan and Spanish it is assumed that intonational prominence falls on clause-final position and that prominence shift is not an available mechanism (Vallduví 1991, Zubizarreta 1998). However, it remains unclear which prosodic strategies are possible (pitch accent shape; postfocal compression; differences in alignment, duration or pitch height), under which circumstances they operate, and how they interact with syntax. Since prominence shift is not an available strategy to make the focused constituent fall under prominence, alternative syntactic mechanisms are proposed in order to vary the location of prominence. Thus, for Catalan, Vallduví (1991) proposes dislocation of the nonfocal material of a sentence to ensure that elements that a speaker wishes to focalize appear in the rightmost position, whereas, in Spanish, the nonfocal material undergoes movement to a non canonical position (p-movement or *prosodically motivated movement*, Zubizarreta 1998). Other syntactic strategies such as focus fronting or clefting seem to be restricted to a contrastive meaning (Solà 1990 for Catalan, Zubizarreta 1998 for Spanish).

This paper investigates how prosody interacts with syntax in the expression of focus in Catalan and Spanish through an experimental study. With the aim of obtaining comparable data, the same uniform controlled methodology was used for the two languages. The method was designed to elicit semi-spontaneous speech while allowing us to control for factors such as focus type (broad, information or contrastive focus), length of the constituents (ranging from one to two PWs) and Embeddedness (half of the second VP-complements were arguments and the other half were adjuncts).

References

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